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Ed Andrade examines a solar heat collector atop a S. 20th Street house which provides the dwelling with hot water

Citizens pull together and get ahead...

By ERNEST ROBERTSON

Ten years ago, in the wake of the Newark riots, a number of clergymen and civil rights activists came together to form the Tri-City Coalition an affiliation of autonomous community development groups in Newark, Jersey City and Paterson.

The Jersey City and Paterson factions folded shortly after the coalition's formation, but the Newark group, now known as the Tri-City Citizens Union for Progress, continued and has evolved as a leading proponent of neighborhood development in Newark's West Ward.

Since 1967, when Tri-City began its initial housing rehabilitation project, its programs have expanded to include housing maintenance, homeowner assistance, energy conservation, neighborhood employment, day care, health and nutrition, a neighborhood aid and information service and a tax aid service.

Tri-City's service area is now confined to a 12-block area which extends from Springfield Avenue to 16th Avenue and Westside Park to the Irvington line in the West ward.

"After 10 years of work, we are shifting our emphasis from developing programs designed to meet specific singular community needs, to one which fosters a neighborhood development concept," said Rebecca Andrade, Tri-City's executive director.

"Our first housing venture, Amity Village 1, is now

Children enjoying the benefits of a Tri-City playground

completely cooperative and is owned by the 96 families who reside in each of the three-family homes," explained Andrade, who has been associated with Tri-City since its founding. "And Amity Village 2 is owned by Tri-City in trust and will become a cooperative for 201 families by 1978. All total, we are managing 300 apartments in 67 buildings in the West Ward."

Andrade said years of expeience have taught Tri-City administrators that it's not enough to provide housing and then expect a neighborhood to develop.

"We purchased most of the homes that make up the two villages from Ukrainian homeowners who, when they resided here, lived together in a close-knit neighborhood," she said.

"When our tenants first arrived, however, many of them had been dislocated as a result of construction of the College of Medicine and Dentistry. There didn't exist a sense of neighborhood. They came from several ethnic groups and hardly associated with one another.

* * *

"Over the past year, our thrust has been to get residents within our service area more involved with each other and in making collective decisions that affect the entire 12-block community," said Andrade, whose organization provides multiple services to 25 per cent of the 2,500 residents in the area.

"It is our belief that people who live here must identify with some responsibility to their community. We want to help people see the importance of developing a neighborhood in which decisions concerning security, beautification, unemployment, children's needs, litter and other problems can be approached collectively."

Tri-City began its first effort as a community development agency as the non-profit sponsor of Amity Village 1, in conjunction with Priorities Investment Corp. of Newark, a housing rehabilitation company. Priorities Investment rehabilitated the houses, while Tri-City provided social and community organization within the rehabilitated neighborhoods.

In 1971, the group opened the Tri-City People's Center, in a building that was once Ukrainian church located next to its headquarters at 675 South 19th St. The three-story brick structure now houses Tri-City's day care center, its after-school tutorial program and a staff training facility. A year later, Tri-City opened a community health center at 582 South 19th St., and this year opened a Community Aid and Information Center at 668 South 20th St.

"We've learned from years of experience that centralization of community services in most instances doesn't work," assorted Andrade. "It just can't adequately provide the multiplicity of services required for an inner city neighborhood."

"Our aim, therefore, has been to decentralize services," she said. "In the area of crime prevention, for example, each resident of the two villages is responsible for looking out for his neighbor's interests. As a result, each resident has a number of eyes, instead of one or two pair. This is a more adequate system for crime prevention than having one centralized policing system for the service area."

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Earlier this year, Tri-City pioneered in the introduction of solar energy in inner city neighborhoods at Amity Village 1 homes, in an effort to cut the cost of utility bills. The residents were also provided training in home insulation installation as a further conservation measure.

Redeem the Cities...

CITIZENS UNION FOR PROGRESS

Economic development of the community

Education of children and adults for the world of work

Greater awareness of the cultural heritages of the community

General community rehabilitation

Wider civic participation

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TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

1977 marked the 10th year of the Citizens Union for Progress.

In these ten years, we have come from a small organization of less than 10 volunteers meeting in a storefront on Springfield Avenue, to our present organization of numerous volunteers and over 40 regular paid employees. In that time, we have established the following programs:

* Rehabilitation of 300 units of housing
* 96-family housing cooperative called Amity Village No. 1
* Management of 200 housing units owned by Tri-City, called Amity Village 2A
* Housing maintenance program
* Neighborhood employment and training
* Bi-cultural child care program for 95 children, ages 2-8
* Women and children's preventive health care center
* Neighborhood Aid and Information Center
* Youth development activities
* Energy Conservation
* Technical assistance to smaller community based programs
* Coalition building and advocacy

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Our major objective is to organize the 12 SQUARE BLOCK TARGET AREA into a neighborhood that will be a "show-place" for communities. Plans in 1978 include:

Rehabilitation of 50 apartments in abandoned buildings

Conversion of Amity Village 2A into a housing cooperative

Organization of a Neighborhood Credit Union

Opening of an energy conservation training center for homeowners

Coalition building to put "neighborhoods" on the public agenda